

Chapter Fifteen

AR-RAJA'A (HOPING)

The meaning of Raja'a (hoping) and how it differs from wishful thinking

Raja'a means hoping for Allah's mercy and seeking His help, combined with fear of His punishment. It entails doing good and working to accomplish this hope. In contrast, wishful thinking does not entail any action or sacrifice. The Qur'an explains that our wishes will not prevail, but it is what we do that will determine our fate: either being rewarded for our good deeds or being punished for our wrong deeds:

﴿لَيْسَ بِأَمَانِيكُمْ وَلَا أَمَانِي أَهْلِ الْكِتَابِ مَنْ يَعْمَلْ سُوءًا يُجْزَى بِهِ وَلَا يَجِدْ لَهُ مِنْ

دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلِيًّا وَلَا نَصِيرًا ﴿١٢٣﴾ [النساء: ١٢٣]

Not your desires, nor those of the People of the Book (can prevail): whoever works evil, will be requited accordingly. Nor will he find, besides Allah, any protector or helper.

An-Nesa'a 4 : 123

﴿وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَأُولَٰئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ

الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ نَقِيرًا ﴿١٢٤﴾ [النساء: ١٢٤]

If any do deeds of righteousness, - be they male or female - and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them.

An-Nesa'a 4 : 124

What are the essential elements of Raja'a or hope?

- 1- A proper understanding that Allah controls our life and destiny: He cares for us and provides for us, and we must obey His orders
- 2- We hope for Allah's forgiveness and mercy
- 3- We are fearful of His wrath and punishment
- 4- We are hopeful for Allah's reward

A proper understanding of our accountability to Allah

Those who believe understand that they are accountable to Allah, and that Allah has full control of their life and destiny. Therefore, they confirm their faith in the way they live their life by obeying Allah and by striving in His cause. They are promised Allah's mercy and forgiveness:

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا وَجَاهَدُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَولَئِكَ يَرْجُونَ رَحْمَتَ اللَّهِ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴾ [البقرة: ٢١٨]

Those who believed and those who suffered exile and fought (and strove and struggled) in the path of Allah, they have the hope of the Mercy of Allah: and Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Al-Baqara 2 : 218

This behavior of faith and hope is quite different from those who have nothing to depend on and have nothing to hope for:

﴿ وَلَا تَهِنُوا فِي ابْتِغَاءِ الْقَوْمِ إِن تَكُونُوا تَأْمُونًا فَإِنَّهُمْ يَأْمُونُ كَمَا تَأْمُونُ ۗ وَتَرْجُونَ مِنَ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَرْجُونَ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا ﴾ [النساء: ١٠٤]

And slacken not in following up the enemy: if ye are suffering hardships, they are suffering similar hardships; but ye have hope from Allah, while they have none. And Allah is full of Knowledge and Wisdom.

An-Nesa'a 4 : 104

Those who deny their accountability to Allah are preoccupied with pursuing and fulfilling their vain desires. Soon, will they realize that their abode is in Hell Fire, but it will then be too late:

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا وَرَضُوا بِالْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَاطْمَأَنَّنُوا بِهَا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ آيَاتِنَا غَافِلُونَ ﴾ [يونس: ٧]

Those who rest not their hope on their meeting with Us, but are pleased and satisfied with the life of the Present, and those who heed not Our Signs,

Yunus 10 : 7

﴿ أُولَئِكَ مَا لَهُمْ النَّارُ بِمَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴾ [يونس: ٨]

Their abode is the Fire, because of the (evil) they earned.

Yunus 10 : 8

In contrast, those who believe and do good their abode is enjoyment in heaven:

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ يَهْدِيهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ بِإِيمَانِهِمْ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴾ [يونس: ٩]

Those who believe, and work righteousness, their Lord will guide them because of their Faith: beneath them will flow rivers in Gardens of Bliss.

Yunus 10 : 9

﴿ دَعْوَاهُمْ فِيهَا سُبْحَانَكَ اللَّهُمَّ وَتَحِيَّاتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَامٌ ۚ وَءَاخِرُ دَعْوَاهُمْ أَنِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴾ [يونس: ١٠]

(This will be) their cry therein: "Glory to Thee, O Allah!" and "Peace" will be their greeting therein! and the close of their cry will be: "Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the Worlds!"

Yunus 10 : 10

Hope of Allah's mercy and forgiveness and fear of His punishment

It is these two forces: hope and fear, that shape our behavior. We are hopeful of Allah's mercy, yet we are fearful of His punishment. The Qur'an states:

﴿ نَبِّئْ عِبَادِي أَنِّي أَنَا الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴾ [الحجر: ٤٩]

Tell My servants that I am indeed the Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful,
Al-Hijr 15 : 49

﴿ وَأَنَّ عَذَابِي هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْأَلِيمُ ﴾ [الحجر: ٥٠]

And that My Penalty will be indeed the most grievous Penalty.
Al-Hijr 15 : 50

This hope of Allah's mercy fills our hearts and does not allow us to give up hope or to despair. The Qur'an explains that no sins are great to cause us to give up hope of Allah's mercy and forgiveness:

﴿ قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ

الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴾ [الزمر: ٥٣]

Say: "O my Servants who have transgressed against their souls! despair not of the Mercy of Allah: for Allah forgives all sins: for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

Az-Zumar 39 : 53

Hope of Allah's reward

Those who believe and do good are looking forward to reward from Allah for their effort, patience and sacrifice. Such reward was promised to them as the Qur'an explains:

﴿ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ كِتَابَ اللَّهِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَنفَقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً

يَرْجُونَ تِجَارَةً لَّن تَبُورَ ﴾ [فاطر: ٢٩]

Those who rehearse the Book of Allah, establish regular Prayer, and spend (in Charity) out of what We have provided for them, secretly and openly, hope for a Commerce that will never fail:

Fatir 35 : 29

﴿ لِيُوفِّيَهُمْ أُجُورَهُمْ وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ إِنَّهُ غَفُورٌ شَكُورٌ ﴾ [فاطر: ٣٠]

For He will pay them their meed, nay, He will give them (even) more out of His Bounty; for He is Oft-Forgiving, Most Ready to appreciate (service).

Fatir 35 : 30